ON THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS

By Charles McLean Andrews*

Before we take into consideration the main subject of this article, let me say a word about documents in general, quite apart from their place in the world of experience. I am not concerned with the documentary accumulations of recent years or with the problem of what to do with future acquisitions; my concern is with the past only and with the records and papers upon which the historian has depended and must depend for his evidence.

The historian works within a field of three dimensions. He deals first with documentary sources, either in print or manuscript; then with the technique of research, either within the special field of his choice or in general among collections in public or private hands; and finally, with the problems of arrangement and interpretation, in the attempt to understand what his material means and to present his conclusions in suitable literary and artistic form. By far the most important of these activities are research and interpretation and most often are these made the subject of instruction and guidance, for they represent the creative powers of the historian, without which the document would be inert and inanimate, and though highly prized by the intelligent collector, would become a mere tool of trade or an object of idle curiosity to the ordinary observer. In itself the document is not important. The past cannot be reconstructed by those whose knowledge of life is derived solely from documents, for these relics of the past do not tell the whole story. Many writers whose works are filled with an overplus of documentary citations or are crowded with excessive amounts of learned information may prove to be very poor historians; and their histories are likely not only to lack perspective and proportion but to be wholly wanting in that insight into reality which makes the past instructive to living men. In a measure the same is true of those who depend solely on such documentary sources as by chance happen to be found only in print. The English historian, Freeman, is known never to have used a manuscript and confessed that he was entirely ignorant of

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A biographical sketch of Charles McLean Andrews by Leonard W. Labaree may be found in *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Third Series, I, (January 1944), 3-15.

paleography; and the American, John Fiske, who was working on a history of the colonies and living in London across from the British Museum, never went near its manuscript room, and probably never heard of the Public Record Office which was only a mile and a half away. He once likened the painstaking investigator to a sleeping dog snapping at flies. This neglect of record material and the further ignoring by both men of the social, economic, and commercial aspects of the history they were writing, place Freeman in the second rank as an historian and Fiske many degrees lower in the scale of values.

The printed source is, of course, indispensable, but no scholar, aiming at even approximate completeness either of fact or interpretation, would content himself with the limited supply of printed texts. Happily, the amount of such printed textual material is steadily increasing, probably indeed faster than historians are raised up to use it. One can but urge the desirability of continued publication of documents as rapidly as possible, for the record once printed is safe and readily available for use whenever wanted. Unfortunately the unprinted document, no matter how well preserved, is never safe, never certainly secure against unforeseen disaster. Also it is far from being easily accessible. The world of the manuscript is in many ways the *terra incognita* of the historian, the unknown land of promise and the equally unknown land of discouragement and disappointment, where his anticipation as to what he hopes to find is often thwarted by human carelessness and stupidity. He may know where many manuscripts are and be content that nothing will happen to them because they are in safe keeping. Again he may know nothing that is certain about them, but may have a scholar's instinctive sense of where they ought to be; or, if the matter be solely one of chance, he may always hope for a lucky discovery, as was the case with the copper plate which I discovered in the Bodleian, in entire ignorance of its significance as one of the corner stones of the Williamsburg Restoration.

As the historian works within a threefold field of activity, so the user of documents has a threefold interest in their welfare. He may view them as material to his hand for the writing of history. He may make them the object of critical examination and orderly classification in the interest of archives and the craft of the archivist, the maker of indexes, and the compiler of guides, such as those issued by the Public Record Office and the Carnegie Institution of Washington. Or he may be interested in documents for their own sake, quite apart from their importance to the historian, the archivist, and the cataloguer, as objects of discovery and preservation. Discovery is a never-ending pursuit, and pres-

ervation is always a matter of infinite concern. The hunt for a manuscript or a collection of manuscripts is an alluring enterprise, somewhat in the same class with the ends sought by the explorer, the archaeologist, and the experimentalist in the field of science, but differing from each of these in that the element of chance is more apt to enter in and cloud the scene. It often happens that no amount of persistence, no expenditure of effort, and no exercise of superior wisdom will enable the investigator to find what he hopes to find, though success is much more likely than not to come to the expert trained to know where to look and to recognize the value of his discovery when made. As in science, archaeology, and exploration, great results often come by accident, and it is the constant hope of finding something hitherto unknown, something known but lost, or something known but the whereabouts of which can only be conjectured, that keeps the historical investigator keyed up to a very high pitch of expectancy.

I know of no greater thrill of happiness than that which comes from the discovery in manuscript form of something of value hitherto unknown. Therein lies the stimulus to research, the determination to leave no task incomplete, no matter how dreary it may be, for as Maitland has said, one never knows when he will turn over the stone under which lies the toad with the jewel in its head. I doubt if any one in the world of affairs or in the world of sport can ever feel quite the same gratification as that which comes from the unexpected discovery of an important manuscript or group of manuscripts. Such gratification was experienced by Bancroft when Saintsbury in the old State Paper Office in Whitehall brought to him the manuscript record of the proceedings of the first legislative assembly in our history, that of 1619; by Vinogradoff when he identified Bracton's notebook in the British Museum; or by Henry J. Murphy of the Long Island Historical Society when he found in an old bookshop in Amsterdam the manuscript diary of Jasper Danckaerts, the Labadist, a diary now known to every student of the colonies and recognized as one of the most important documents in colonial history.

But against this hope of discovery that springs eternal in the historian's breast there stands the melancholy reflection of how many thousands of documents no longer exist, permanently lost because of fire, neglect, carelessness, or deliberate destruction. Fires have been the cause of the greatest tragedies in the field of the manuscript, and all archivists in all countries have their tale to tell of misfortunes, complete or partial. Fires have destroyed great collections totally or in part or have injured them to such an extent as to place them almost beyond the hope of repair. Some of these fires have been the intentional or accidental acts of war-

ring armies, as when the British troops burned the capitol in Washington in 1814 or the forces burned a part of Richmond on April 3, 1865, including the court house, in which were stored large numbers of ancient records. Partly in consequence of this appalling calamity and other ravages of the Civil War, hundreds of county court records for Virginia in the seventeenth century no longer exist. It has been estimated that only about one hundred and thirty volumes remain intact out of not less than five hundred and possibly one thousand. With two exceptions no records remain of the counties lying along the east bank of the James below Richmond and even in one of these the records are complete only for the last few years of the period. It is said that the Indian Mutiny of 1857 cost Indian families and government great numbers of old papers and documents relating to the history of these families and to the details of British occupancy. One can but anticipate with dread the possible destruction of records resulting from the indiscriminate ravages of the present war in Europe, particularly in the bombings of London and the cities of Holland and Belgium.[1] Though doubtless in the case of London every precaution has been taken to evacuate the leading repositories, there must have occurred losses of which at present we know nothing. It is a great relief to us all to know of the copies from British archives now in this country, especially in the Library of Congress and to a lesser extent in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and in state commissions and historical societies elsewhere. These copies are exact transcripts, photostats, or microfilms from the British Museum, the Public Record Office, and other British archives, with many from the archives of France, Spain, and Holland, numbering literally thousands of texts covering American Colonial history from the beginning of the period to the close of the Revolutionary War. In some cases papers of a later date have been included. The inception of this undertaking thirty-five years ago seems to us now to have been almost providentially inspired.

Losses by acts of war are unique only in their magnitude. The burning of the British Custom House in London in 1814 cost our scholars some of the most essential materials for the history of colonial commerce. The fire that burned to the ground the old Banqueting Hall in Whitehall in 1619 destroyed many books and papers of the Privy Council Office, leaving a gap of twelve years in the proceedings of that board. Another fire in Whitehall in 1689 led to the loss of valuable departmental papers, while the

[1] Mr. Andrews did not live to know of the destruction of the great repositories in Italy. E. W. A., editor of manuscript.

great fire of 1666 in London and the burning of the Hotel de Ville in Paris in 1871 resulted in losses the extent of which can never be determined. The burning of two Quaker meeting houses in London, one in 1666 and the other in 1820, resulted in irreparable damage to the documents for the early history of the Society of Friends in England. When in 1834 the parliament buildings were burned down it was only by the greatest presence of mind that the manuscripts of the House of Lords were saved.

One of the most serious disasters in this country, though it affected a somewhat narrower field of historical interest, occurred in 1906 when three hundred volumes of Spanish archives of California, constituting the largest collection of Spanish decrees, memorials, orders, and proceedings extant in the United States, were destroyed in the San Francisco earthquake and fire. It is the more difficult to reconcile oneself to this loss when one remembers that an offer from the Library of Congress, perhaps too peremptorily made, to receive these documents for safekeeping was turned down without hesitation in 1902 by the authorities of San Francisco, who wanted them to remain where they were. Nearer at hand is the great fire in the New York State Library, March 29, 1911, when among the vast number of other books and bundles of papers wholly or partly ruined some ninety per cent of the executive minutes of the province of New York were totally lost, thus bringing to an end the work of editing these minutes and file papers begun by the state historian a few years before. All that we now have or ever can have of these minutes, with their illustrative and collateral documents, covers the very short period from 1668 to 1673.

Losses by fire on so large a scale are to be regretted beyond measure, but they do not arouse the exasperation of the historian as do the losses due to the indifference or neglect of those whose business it is to take care of them. Two towns in Onondaga County, New York, burned up their old records in a holocaust on the lawn in front of the courthouse, because a newly-appointed clerk needed the room in which they were stored. A superintendent of the capitol in Nashville, Tennessee, had three thousand great books relating to the state bank and its branches ripped from their covers and sold to the paper dealers, while the covers were sent to the filling dump. After the battle of Bladensburg, Maryland, the secretaries of the Federal Government hastily packed masses of documents in barrels and carried them to safety before the British advanced on Washington. At the end of the war these papers were returned to the capitol and remained there, neglected and largely forgotten, until after the Federal defeat at Bull Run when Washington became so crowded with Federal soldiers as to require ad-

ditional quarters for temporary housing. Then the barrels, dusty and stained with age, were ruthlessly cast out and ordered to be thrown into a neighboring marsh. Only a few of the papers were rescued in the nick of time, but these few showed that the whole contained correspondence of the period before the Revolution, the importance and value of which are beyond calculation.

About 1840 a dealer in London purchased at £7 a ton a large accumulation of wastepaper from the Somerset House authorities. By the merest accident it was discovered that among these papers were Exchequer Office Accounts of the reign of Henry VII, together with Secret Service Accounts and Wardrobe Accounts of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. In 1857 three hundred tons of papers, including the records of the Indian Navy went from the old India House to the paper mill. A barrel of Franklin papers was rescued at the last moment from a paper mill in New Jersey. More Franklin papers were recovered some eighty years ago from a tailor's shop in London, where the tailor was beginning to use them for making his paper patterns. One of the two original charters of the Colony of Connecticut was partly cut up by a member of the Wyllys family in Hartford as a lining for a bonnet, when the mutilated remainder was fortunately recognized by an intelligent observer and is now in the possession of the Connecticut Historical Society.

Even where documents have not been destroyed, their neglect by official custodians is notorious and could be illustrated many times over. The most conspicuous instance is the refusal of Congress, though importuned for more than half a century in memorials, petitions, resolutions of historical societies, and the drafting of bills, to take any steps looking to the care of the government archives in Washington. Before the present handsome building was erected in the years from 1931 to 1935 and a national archivist appointed, the indifference of Congress had attained the proportions of a national disgrace. Only by extraordinary good fortune was it that up to that date had many of the government documents remained intact. They had been stored in barns, lofts, abandoned theatres, and other rented buildings, all of them readily combustible, with their contents liable to injury not only from fire but also from damp and the inroads of vermin. For years it began to look as if only some very serious disaster could awaken our nation's representatives to a sense of their duty, a duty which up to that time had been performed without exception by every other civilized nation in the world. Another striking example of governmental indifference and neglect is to be found in the British colony of Jamaica. Information regarding this case I have received from one of my graduate students, who until the outbreak

of the war had spent five years trying to bring order out of a most chaotic condition of the archives at Kingston. These archives, in a few instances running back into the eighteenth century, were found stored in janitor's quarters, piled up in indiscriminate masses, cheek by jowl with mops, brooms, iron pipes, and other miscellaneous débris, a mute witness to the unconcern of an apathetic colonial administration. Conditions are better now, but with the pressure removed, the government is not likely to continue the work so well begun. Did we know all the facts, a similar statement could be made about the archives in other British colonies in the West Indies, where ants, damp, heat, dryness, and mold have resulted in the ruin of nearly all the older archival material there. Happily the correspondence and reports of the West Indian governors are in London, with transcripts in the Library of Congress.

Closely associated with the ignorance and luke-warmness of custodians are the depredations committed by conscienceless collectors who see in a store of documents only a quarry for holographs and autographs. Those in charge of such material have taken advantage of this stewardship to reap some small gain from their opportunity and to drive hard bargains in selling either the documents themselves or the freedom to exploit them. As a result stamps have been torn off, signatures cut out, and even complete documents, sometimes many pages in length, have been purloined. One of the most amusing instances in this category is that of an official who had in his custody a bundle of letters, written, as he thought, by one of the popes. He would sell them surreptitiously but was uncertain of their value as he did not know which of the popes had written them, for they bore only the signature "A. Pope." It did not take long for his fellow plotter to inform him that the author was the well-known Bard of Twickenham, Alexander Pope, and not one of the Holy Fathers in the Vatican at Rome. The enthusiasm for signatures is intimately connected with that for extra-illustrating, the collecting not only of manuscripts but also of engravings, prints, and bookplates. In the process the collector's passion often dulls his sense of ordinary honesty. It has taken many years to impress upon the world the sacredness of an historical document.

Less culpable but no less serious in some of its consequences was the practice which prevailed in England, but more rarely in this country, of officials carrying off records to private houses. Early judges and government officials, deeming the papers that accumulated during their incumbency their private property, carried them home at the expiration of their terms. Hence such papers found their way into private collections, into the chests

containing the family archives or into the hands of the auctioneers or the great second-hand bookshops. This practice explains why so many state papers are to be found today in the muniment rooms of private houses or in libraries such as the British Museum, the Huntington Library, the Clements Library, and elsewhere. For example, the Cecil, Egerton, Harleian, Cottonian, Newcastle, Bridgewater, and Shelburne papers are full of documents that ought by right of origin, to be in official keeping. This practice explains why the papers, partly official and partly personal, of William Blathwayt, auditor general of the plantation revenues from 1680 to 1717, are today so widely scattered, some in the Public Record Office, some in the Huntington Library, and some —a very large and important group, sold at Sotheby's in 1910— in the hands of a Bond Street bookseller who, as far as I know, may still have them in his possession. Many others in private hands in England, such as the Knox, Cornwallis, and Dartmouth papers, contain invaluable material for colonial history. Some of these have been calendared by the Historical Manuscripts Commission in its more than three hundred volumes. In occasional cases, such as of the Portland papers, provision for their use by students has been made by the owners, but this treatment is far from being accorded to all, and many an investigator has experienced the difficulties that attended his efforts to obtain access to them. While some of the papers in private hands have been well cared for, others have been lost or destroyed, and there are phases and even periods of English and Colonial history for which source material is dishearteningly meagre. A similar situation presents itself when persons in charge of official documents have themselves abstracted some of these documents for their own use. George Chalmers, clerk of the Privy Council's committee of trade after 1784 and once a lawyer in Baltimore for a number of years, borrowed manuscripts of the old Board of Trade, more or less in his custody, for the purpose of writing his political history of the colonies. Many of these he never returned, as is known from the list of books borrowed, which is still preserved.

The gross neglect which has characterized the care of official records in the past is one of the least pardonable of all the sins committed against the writing of history. Of some thirty reports made a few years ago upon our state archives not one but contains its tale of woe. Placed in charge of ignorant and careless keepers, often politically appointed, to whom an ancient record is a useless incumbrance, valuable documents have been relegated to any place of deposit not wanted for other purposes. In garrets, vaults, closets, and bins, in coal holes, and stables they have been subjected to every kind of indignity. They have been soaked with

water from leaking roofs, drenched with the filth of overflowing sewers, rotted with the damp of underground cellars, scattered by the wind during repairs to buildings, trodden under foot in corridors used for daily passage, ravaged by mice, worms, ants, and other vermin or, where still in use, allowed to remain unrepaired or to be worn away bit by bit until reduced to fragments too tattered and fragile to be of service. Little wonder that papers thus neglected have been subject to acts of vandalism and plunder. Who can blame the janitor that used papers found in his cellar bins to start his fires, as happened in the case of the public archives of Delaware. The blame lies with those in authority who out of a mistaken sense of economy failed to make any adequate provision, in the way of housing and staff, for the preservation and classification of the official records of their governments, whether federal, state, or city.

But as far as official records are concerned, the dark ages are passing and today the records that survive are generally treated with respect. Unhappily, in some of our own states only remnants have survived. Delaware, for example, has lost probably two-thirds of its legislative proceedings for the Colonial period, and Kentucky no longer possesses a complete series of its journals and the accompanying files of its legislative activities. Even the printed senate and house journals of Maryland, of date before 1807, can no longer be found. But such losses are not likely to occur again. Today as a rule official documents are well kept and in some cases printed, though the states differ widely in this particular. Urged on by the private investigator, historical associations, and influential committees acting in conjunction with state archivists, state governments are rising to a sense of their responsibilities and to an appreciation of the importance of the records in their care. In such great public and private repositories as the Biblothèque Nationale, the Public Record Office, the Huntington Library, the Clements Library, the New York Public Library, and in many of the official archival centers, state libraries, and the libraries of historical societies throughout the country, documents are eagerly sought for and scrupulously preserved. In fireproof surroundings, on dry and commodious shelves, bound in volumes, tied up in bundles, or laid in boxes, the neglected and abused record has at last come into its own. The British Museum rejects no fragment, even though to all appearances it is only a piece of blank paper, for there is always the question of a secret writing or a watermark. Forgeries have been detected by examining the texture of the paper, and the study of watermarks frequently serves as a help to identification. All the leading record repositories and some historical libraries and museums devote to the

repair of documents a skill that is little short of marvellous. Holes are filled in, rents mended, ragged edges guarded, folds ironed out, and fragile sheets so covered with transparent material, some of it of very recent invention, as to render them not only readable but far stronger than before. If there are tragedies in the realm of the manuscript sources of the past there are miracles also, and methods of restoration that are able to overcome some of the worst of the ravages of time and neglect.

While the problem of the official and legal records is thus in the way of a satisfactory solution, that of the non-official material in private hands, a far more difficult matter, is as yet only at the beginning. Probably there are few, if any, strictly official documents privately possessed, so that material of this kind is bound to have a more or less intimate family association and therefore to offer few clues as to its whereabouts. Members of such families as held positions of prominence in colony, state, or nation, may well have accumulated papers semi-official in character, but such instances are likely to be rare and are probably well known, as in the case of the Galloway papers in the possession of descendants in Annapolis, supplemental to the Galloway documents in the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress. It is not too much to hope that some day an attempt will be made systematically to inquire as to where such papers are to be found, in much the same way that the state archivists of Pennsylvania and Maryland have conducted their surveys and have prepared detailed lists of county material, partly official and partly legal. In the absence of any such organized inquiry knowledge of such papers must be more or less a matter of chance, for it is doubtful if the owners of family papers are always themselves aware of their historical value. Even when known such material is not easy to obtain, unless voluntarily offered. Owners are loath to part with their family possessions, partly through fear of the disclosure of family secrets and a disinclination to admit strangers into the innermost penetralia of family history; partly through a certain family pride in retaining that which is their own; and partly through an unwillingness to go to the trouble of examining, sorting, and selecting such papers as are not of an intimate family nature. Then, too, there are a few groups of documents, of interest and value to the historian, that are not always recognized even by the owners themselves as worthy of preservation. Let me say a word or two on this point.

With widening of the historical field to include subjects formerly more or less ignored or considered beneath the dignity of the scholar, certain classes of historical material have definitely increased in value. Such material is largely impersonal, as relating

to the social, cultural, and occupational activities of a family, group, or community. Clio may be Olympian, but the Clio of today must come down from Olympus and delve and labor in a manner that would have shocked Lord Bacon, who deemed such forms and objects of historical writing beneath his dignity or the dignity of any other historian. What can be done with data of this kind appears in two volumes recently published in England, written by Miss Scott Thomson and entitled *Life in a Noble Household* and the *Russells in Bloomsbury, 1669-1771.* These volumes are based on papers preserved in a succession of business rooms of Bedford House, London, to which Miss Thomson was given free access. There she found business letters and papers, accounts, inventories, rent books, and leases, accumulated in the course of a century in the history of the Bedford family. It is not too much to say that papers of this kind are greatly contributory to an understanding of family life anywhere. They are also contributory to a knowledge of conditions attending the commercial, mercantile, and financial history of an age, subjects which are more and more gaining the attention of the scholar who wishes to penetrate deeply into fundamental causes. Such evidence furnishes illuminating details of domestic concerns, travel, education, food, prices, areas of supply and demand, markets, household furnishings, family investments and enterprises, all of which are legitimate objects of the historian's quest.

While few American families are likely to possess documentary records covering such a length of time or dealing with such a variety of topics as does this noble household in England, nevertheless it is more than likely that many households have in trunks, chests, and dark attic corners, papers similar in content. The ledgers and account books of the stores that existed along the Potomac, the Patuxent, and other Maryland and Virginia rivers in late colonial times, the itemized statements and balance sheets of individuals engaged in the tobacco and grain business, the records of transactions that show the drift of trade, the opening of markets, and the commercial business done with the other colonial ports, the West Indies, and across the seas—these are all grist for the historian's mill. There are in the Library of Congress scores of merchants' firm accounts; there are more in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the New York Historical Society, all of which are filled with the names of buyers and sellers and what they bought or exchanged. Such information discloses not only the business done and who did it but also the scarcity of money and the increase of "desperate debts," as they were called, and it often throws a flood of light upon the

financial conditions prevailing in the years particularly after 1760, about which at present we know far too little. What is needed now is not so much material relating to the leading men of a period—those high in office, in public life and in politics, the rich men and the great landowners—as that which concerns the lesser men, the inconspicuous men, their lives, habits, and ways of making a living. We need more such information as that contained in the Allason Papers in the Virginia State Library, in the Collins and Barrel papers in the Library of Congress, and in many similar papers in the historical societies along the eastern seaboard. Almost any collection of family documents is likely to contain material helping to solve some of the problems of life in urban centers and commercial ports, in isolated communities and frontier surroundings, and as such are welcome to the writer whose interests do not lie merely upon the surface. The time has passed when history can be written from formal documents. The actual experiences of planters, tenants, merchants, artisans, indentured servants, and others who made up the bulk of the population of a given area are bound to contribute to an understanding of the actual conditions under which men lived, suffered, and died, to a greater extent than legislative enactments can ever do.

But material of this sort is not the only kind likely to be found in the possession of private families. There are diaries, often bare and jejune, but frequently revealing when taken up with the minutiae of daily life. There are journals, with accounts of travels either for pleasure or business, sometimes with information not found elsewhere. There are the crude and often illiterate memoranda of itinerant peddlers, records of ministerial duties and experiences, descriptions of visits to England and elsewhere, with details and impressions. I could cite many illustrations, but will be content with only one. In the garret of a house at Great Neck, New York, were found in 1910, among a mass of papers, the letters of Denys de Berdt, agent in London of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, copied into a quarto blank book of one hundred and thirty-four pages. Such a discovery, one of the most interesting of recent times, was sufficiently worthwhile in itself, but of even greater significance as throwing light on the work of a colonial agent in England. Of such material far too little is available today. Some has been printed but not all. What exists shows the difficulties encountered by such men as Partridge, Garth, Charles, Franklin, Bollan, Mauduit, and others in doing business with the boards and councils in

Westminster, Whitehall, and the City of London. Not much material of this sort is likely to be found in Maryland, for only twice, once in 1740 and again in 1767, did the House of Delegates appoint an agent to plead their cause before the king in council, and then without result. But when found elsewhere, evidence of this kind sometimes shows that these men fought battles that in their way were as important as military encounters and fights at sea.

The great menace to the retention of papers in family custody is lack of security. Could the tale of loss by fire, negligence, and deliberate destruction, be told in its entirety, as it never can be, it would be long and harrowing. A few cases at large are familiar to the historian. The most famous tragedy of the kind took place in October 23, 1734, when Ashburnham House in Westminster was burned down, in which were stored the priceless collections of Sir Robert Cotton. As a result large numbers of manuscript volumes went up in smoke or were injured beyond repair. A fire in the house of the historian Mommsen resulted in the loss of rare documents loaned him by the German National Library, for which he and his friends had to pay many thousand marks. In this country the burning of the house of a Georgia professor led to the total destruction of a set of twenty-two volumes of transcripts from British archives loaned him by the State of Georgia. The sack of Thomas Hutchinson's house by a mob in Boston, August 26, 1765, and the scattering of his papers in the street, resulted in serious losses of documents, though the manuscript of his history was in large part recovered. Similarly when the house of the loyalist, Joseph Galloway, was attacked in 1778 and his papers scattered, many valuable documents are known to have been carried off. How many papers have been burned up in the reduction to ashes of houses of lesser note can never be known, but one never hears of such events, notably in Virginia, without wondering what historical material of value such houses may have contained. Next to fire is ignorance akin to stupidity, such as that of a woman in Maine who in renting her house to one who she knew was interested in history explained that there had been many old newspapers in the attic, the more recent of which she had saved, but the oldest ones, to her only of antiquarian interest, she had carefully burned. One does not like to think what may have happened in other and similar cases.

As far as I understand it, the obligations of a state do not embrace the search for unofficial and private papers in the hands of individuals and families. It is an interesting and not

unimportant question whether efforts in this direction might not be made through the agency of local societies or through some sort of cooperative activity on the part of individuals interested in the future writing of colonial history. Were the desire to obtain knowledge of the whereabouts of such material generally known or were such knowledge obtained inadvertently or indirectly it might be possible to make up a roster of family papers with descriptions of content. Publicity would undoubtedly help, personal letters from an authorized committee would invite responses, unofficial cooperative activities might be stimulated, and in one way or another a body of useful data might be brought together and entered among the records of local historical societies whose concern they should be. As far as I can learn there exists at the present time very little information as to manuscripts, newspapers, and pamphlets in private hands in the majority of our seaboard states. I cannot believe that such information would be refused if asked for. I even believe that the actual transfer of papers might be effected, except perhaps in individual cases where the desire to keep possession was paramount or where adequate provision has already been made for safe-keeping. The hazard of fire is always present; the hazard from careless handling or from destruction is an almost equal menace, particularly in these days of hotels and apartments instead of homes, and at times when the clearing out of closets and the disposal of rubbish is a source of concern to the harrassed housekeeper who in need of extra room, dislikes living in quarters littered up with trash.

It would be worth while to look into the methods of the various depositories, nearly all of which have the same problems to solve. Among the most active and efficient is the manuscript department of the New York Public Library, which issues a yearly report on manuscript accessions, obtained either by gift or by purchase. A similar list might appear occasionally in the local historical journals, supplemental to the lists of genealogical accessions, of which record is frequently made. The New York Public Library issues also small leaflets as bait for manuscripts, calling attention to the needs of the library and outlining the value of such records as it especially desires to obtain. It accepts all collections on the terms of the donor, with expectation of eventual ownership, free and clear. While outright gift is preferred, the library agrees that deposit may sometimes be desirable. In either case, the giver may decide as to present and future regulations. Some papers held by the library are subject to

withdrawal as occasion may demand. Others are restricted against general access and may be had only with the permission of the donor; access to others is subject to the library's own rules governing similar material in its possession. A similar policy is adopted by the Library of Congress.

The New York Public Library is in frequent contact with the families of deceased persons of prominence and devotes time and thought to the wisest methods of approach and how best to angle and land the fish wanted. Some of its best accessions have come only after years of persuasion; some by will of deceased owners, men unwilling to part with their treasures during their lifetime. No general rules can be laid down. Tact and diplomacy, combined with a plea for the proper protection of valuable historical evidence, are likely to win in the long run. I believe that every local historical society should adopt as a prominent part of its activities the search for manuscript material analogous to that already in its custody, and I know that many are doing so. In so acting they are not only enlarging the field of their usefulness but are certain to increase the pride and contentment of those who are interested in the society's welfare. Even when much is wanted and but little obtained, the effort is always worth the making, for it stimulates interest in historical research and may lead to the discovery of quite unsuspected treasures.